(c) In BCCL, cause of underground fire is basically unscientific mining activities done in the past.

In CCL, the reason for both the mine was spontaneous heating of coal.

(d) and (e) Efforts made by BCCL to combat the fires, are as under:

(i) During 1976-88, 22 fire projects dealing with fire were sanctioned by the coal company, for a total investment of Rs. 114.57 crores covering the then 58 fires out of 70 fires existing at the time of nationalisation.

(ii) Approximately sum of Rs. 76 crores has been spent in fire fighting measures against these fire projects till March 1997. The implementation of these schemes, though could not extinguish all the fires completely, but facilitated to achieve following:

- Liquidated 10 fires completely.
- Controlled majority of the fires from total devastation.
- Reduced the total surface area affected by fire to 8.90 sq. km. from earlier reported area of 17.32 sq. km.
- Reduced the blockage of coal from 1864 MT to 1453 MT.

Presently, as per the Master Plan for Jharia coalfield dealing with fire, subsidence, rehabilitation and diversion of surface infrastructure, approved by the Government in August 2009, an Action Plan has been prepared for dealing all 67 fires (58+9) and a total fund of Rs.2311.50 cores has been earmarked.

In CCL, Experts were engaged from Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CIMFR) for conducting detailed scientific studies immediately after detection of fires. The fire fighting measures were taken as per the guidance and under the supervision of the experts.

Closure of power plants due to short supply of coal

1837. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state whether it is a fact that many public and private sector power plants would be closed down because of short supply of coal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): As reported by the Central Electricity Authority, the coal stock at power plants improved from a level of 9.29 Million Tonnes as on 31st October, 2009 to 10.65 Million Tonnes as on 30th November, 2009. The number of critical power stations having coal stock of less than 7 days reduced from a level of 27 to 25 during the same period. It is expected that coal production and transportation are likely to improve further and therefore, closing down of power plants due to short supply of coal is not being apprehended.

Allocation of coal blocks to CIL

1838. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has been actively considering allocating a large number of blocks to the Coal India Limited;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether a large number of coal blocks, allocated to the State run as well as private power and steel utilities for captive use are lying idle despite years having elapsed; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government to make use of such allocated coal blocks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) An exercise was carried out for identification of new coal blocks. Out of these blocks, Coal India Limited (CIL) has sought to retain 138 coal blocks.

(c) and (d) Development of coal blocks involves a gestation period of 3 to 7 years for reaching the production stage and another two to three years for reaching the optimal production capacity. As per the guidelines, coal production from a captive coal block should commence within 36 months (42 months in case the area falls in forest land) in case of open cast mines and in 48 months (54 months in case the area falls in forest land) in case of underground mine, from the date of allocation. If the coal block is not explored, additional two years are allowed for detailed exploration and three months for preparation of geological report. The allocatees of coal blocks, who have not started production so far, are in various stages of obtaining statutory clearances and mining lease, preparing mining plan, acquisition of land, procuring machinery and equipment etc. for both mining as well as end-use project. So far 208 coal blocks have been allocated with an approximate geological reserves of 48.82 billion tonnes, upto November, 2009 and majority of the coal blocks have been allotted after 2005.

The responsibility of developing the coal block as per the prescribed guidelines and milestone chart attached with the allocation letter rests entirely with the allocattee company. In the terms and conditions of the allocation letters, it is categorically mentioned that in the event of willful delay in the development of coal blocks and in setting up of the end use project, the Government shall take appropriate action to de-allocate the said block. Government periodically monitors and reviews the development of allocated blocks as well as end use plants by the allocattee companies in the Review Meetings. Wherever delays are noticed, Government issues show cause notices and advisories to such allocattees cautioning them to bring the coal blocks into production as per the guidelines/milestones chart. Similarly, the Coal Controller's office is also monitoring on regular basis the achievement of different milestones. Further, the allocattees have to submit Bank Guarantee which remains valid all the times till the production from the coal block reaches its peak rated capacity. The last review meeting was held on 22nd and 23rd June, 2009 with all the coal block allocattees to review the development of coal blocks and the end use projects.

The State Governments have also been requested to form a Monitoring Committee headed by the Chief Secretary to facilitate expeditious development of coal/lignite blocks.

So far, seven coal blocks have been de-allocated after following due process.

Production of synthesis gas at Talchar in Orissa

1839. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that M/s SASOL-TATA combine are producing synthesis gas from their own Coal To Liquid (CTL) project at Talchar in Orissa; and

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the end products and consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) M/s Strategic Energy Technology Systems Limited, a joint venture formed by TATA and SASOL, has been allocated North of Arkhapal coal block on 27.02.2009 with geological reserves of 1500 million tonnes of coal for their coal-to-liquid project in Orissa. The block is unexplored and as per the guidelines for development of coal block, 27 months is allowed for detailed prospecting. These is no coal production at present.

Revival of MAMC

1840. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 334 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 16th August, 2007 and state:

(a) the present status of implementation of MoU that had been signed between CIL and DVC on 1st June, 2007 on the revival of MAMC; and

(b) the tentative date for commencement of the revival process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Coal India Ltd. (CIL) and Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) was firmed up by an agreement signed on 18.09.2007. Subsequently, Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) also joined to form a consortium and a tripartite agreement was signed on 27.09.2007. An application was filed by the consortium praying for the taking over of the Mining and Allied Machinery Corporation (MAMC) was heard by the Hon'ble High Court, Kolkata and stay on liquidation was granted. With the leave granted by the Hon'ble Court, due diligence was conducted by the consortium.

Following the due diligence, various creditors were approached for waiver of their respective dues. Government of West Bengal has agreed in principle to waive its dues if the Central Government took a similar stand. The State Bank of India, being the principal secured creditor, has agreed to settle for substantially reduced amount.

Very recently BEML has expressed a desire to withdraw from the consortium. After settlement of the issues of withdrawal by BEML and the waiver of dues by Government of West Bengal and Central Government the matter will be placed before Hon'ble High Court, Kolkata for further directions.